

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, Claims 1-20 remain in the application, of which claims 1, 11, 12, and 18 are independent. The above-identified Office Action has been reviewed, the references carefully considered, and the Examiner's comments carefully weighed. In view thereof, the present Amendment A is submitted. It is contended that by the present amendment, all bases of rejection set forth in the Office Action have been traversed and overcome. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

After careful reconsideration, applicant respectfully submits that as amended, each of the pending claims patentably distinguishes over the art of record, and requests allowance of all pending claims.

IN THE SPECIFICATION

The applicant has amended the specification at pages 3 and 4 to correct the brief descriptions of Figure 2A through Figure 8D. In the original specification, the description of some of these figures was inaccurate, and others were omitted. No new matter is added by this amendment, since the subject matter thereof is clearly shown by the drawings as originally filed, and since the drawings are part of the original disclosure.

The applicant has further amended the specification at page 7 to provide proper references to Figures 7A and 7B.

IN THE CLAIMS**Claim rejections 35 USC 102**

At item 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-7, 9-14, and 16-20 are rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 102(a) or (e) as being anticipated by Barbour et al. (6,712,067). At item 3 of the Office Action, claims 1-3, 7, 9, and 10 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Dutro (US 5,158,067). At item 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 18-20 under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by Fisher (WO 02/066899).

The applicant respectfully asserts that substantive differences exist between the applicant's invention and that disclosed by Barbour, Dutro, and or Fisher. For example, the upstanding peripheral tabs 18 disclosed by Barbour provide support for non-flat vessels, but do not provide a curved support surface as disclosed by the applicant on page 6, lines 21 and 22, of the specification. Likewise, the tapered inner sleeve 59 disclosed by Dutro is curved, but in the horizontal plane rather than the vertical plane. Fisher does not disclose a curved surface, but rather shows vertical upstands 112. Independent claims 1, 11, and 18 have been amended herein to recite that the second vessel supporting surface is a curved so as to be higher near the periphery of the shell than near the center of the shell. As amended, these claims avoid rejection in view of the cited references, alone or in combination.

As regards independent claim 12, this claim has been amended to recite that the alignment connectors on the shell (see slot 17 in applicant's Figure 4) are positioned on the shell

at a location spaced apart from an edge of the shell. This limitation clearly distinguishes the applicants invention from that of Barbour, whose mounting grooves 26 are formed in the edge of the shell.

Conclusion

Based on all of the foregoing, applicant respectfully submits that all of the objections and rejections set forth in the Office Action have been overcome, and that as presently amended, all of the pending claims are believed to be allowable over all of the references of record, whether considered singly or in combination.

Applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of record, and allowance of the pending claims.

If the Examiner is not fully convinced of all of the claims now in the application, applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner telephonically contact applicant's undersigned representative to expeditiously resolve prosecution of the application.

Favorable consideration is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted, via facsimile, to the United States Patent and Trademark Office on February 1, 2005.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Blau", is written over a horizontal line.